

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
INSEASON ADJUSTMENTS – FINAL ACTION

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) recommends the following for inseason adjustments:

California Recreational Fishery Management: CA-Rec Option 2, with a 2-fish vermilion sub-bag limit as described in [F.8.a, Supplemental CDFW Report 2](#).

Commercial Non-Trawl RCA: Option 1- Move the shoreward boundary of the Non-Trawl RCA between 37° 07' N. lat. and 36° N. lat. to 50 fm.

Below, we offer our thoughts for the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) to consider.

California Recreational Fishery Management Alternatives

California recreational members of the GAP and other industry representatives have met several times with California GMT members in the past few months. We appreciate the effort, skill, and knowledge brought to bear on modeling various recreational season structures and their projected mortality on several extremely constraining rockfish species off California. In particular, we wish to thank Melanie Parker and James Phillips of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).

The GAP endeavored to select season structures both north and south of 36° N. lat. that provide the greatest access to robust species while limiting impacts to others in need of conservation. We wish to have as full access as is available for recreational anglers and the industries that support it.

The GAP therefore supports and recommends to the Council CA-Rec Option 2 as described in [Agenda F.8.a, Supplemental CDFW Report 2](#). Table 5 in that document illustrates that season structure, while Table 6 provides the projected impacts to the constraining species relative to their 2024 harvest limits. For vermilion rockfish, a 2-fish sub-bag limit reduces the projected impact to that species below the informal recreational share of 210.7 mt with a mortality of 195.4 mt. Therefore, the GAP recommends a daily sub-bag limit of 2 fish per angler be the Council's choice for waters south of 40° 10' N. lat.

Table 5. Season dates and depth limits by GMA under CA-Rec Option 2.

Management Area	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Northern	Closed		>50fm	<20fm			>50fm	<20fm	>50fm			
Mendocino	Closed		>50fm	<20fm			>50fm	<20fm	>50fm			
San Francisco	Closed		>50fm	<20fm			>50fm	<20fm	>50fm			
Central – N 36°	Closed		>50fm	<20fm			>50fm	<20fm	>50fm			
Central – S 36°	Closed		All Depth			<50fm		>50fm				
Southern	Closed		All Depth			<50fm		>50fm				

Table 6. Projected recreational total mortality (mt) and 2024 harvest limits of select groundfish species under CA-Rec Option 2. Values projected using RecFISH model and post-model adjustments. Data are from CDFW and subject to change. **Red, bold italic** text denotes projections that exceed harvest limits.

Species	Total Mortality (mt)	Harvest Limit (mt)	Type of Harvest Limit
Yelloweye rockfish (prohibited)	2.5	9.3	CA Rec ACT
Quillback rockfish N of 40°10' N lat. (prohibited)	0.51	0.96	ACT
Quillback rockfish S of 40°10' N lat. (prohibited)	0.66	0.97	ACT
Copper rockfish S of 40°10' N lat.	48.03	87.32	ACT
Vermilion rockfish S of 40°10' N lat.-36° N lat. 4-fish bag (3-fish bag) [2-fish bag]	243.5 (238.0) [195.4]	281.3 (210.7 informal rec share)	ACL Contribution

We note the 50 fm point-to-point lines exist in Federal regulation and are available for use, and the 20 fm point-to-point line now exists in California state regulation and is available for use. Where the 20 fm contour extends into Federal waters, California’s 20 fm lines approximate the exclusive economic zone boundary between state and Federal waters.

In an effort to maintain consistent regulations through the northern Groundfish Management Areas (GMA), supporting CDFW outreach and enforcement efforts, representatives from those ports in those regions made difficult local compromises for the greater good of the whole while maintaining quillback rockfish projected mortality within the minuscule quillback limit. We note it is access to waters inshore of 20 fm that was the most desired of the option.

Regarding the season structure for south of 36° N. lat., the springtime three-month period of all-depth access in CA-Rec Option 2 provides needed flexibility to find calm water fishing opportunities during typically challenging windy weather that time of year.

It is critical to assure, to the extent possible, that charter trips and private boaters have other opportunities in case one area (or more) is inaccessible due to weather. This time of year, crews are economically challenged after three months ashore and getting back to work full-time is exceedingly important.

During the summer quarter, anglers are often focused on ephemeral opportunities for large inshore migratory fish like white sea bass. However, it's the back-up opportunity to provide a much more dependable catch of shallow water rockfish that keeps the charter fleet busy and anglers successful.

Typically, calmer fall weather provides the best access to offshore opportunities in deep waters, so a deep-water-only season works best at this time of year. In addition, during the holiday season, angler interest wanes such that the impact of unfishable weather days is less.

Non-Trawl RCA Boundary Change

The GAP reviewed the numerous public comments in the Council briefing book, all of which stated that the quillback rockfish is very rarely encountered in the waters off Monterey Bay, CA. The GMT catch analysis in Agenda Item F.8.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1 supports those claims. The GAP therefore supports the liberalizing of the RCA in this area to afford some additional access to shelf rockfish fishing grounds. While there may be some costs associated with this option (such as enforcement complexity), the GAP believes that the benefits afforded to the fleet and fishing communities in this area would outweigh those costs.

Referencing the Supplemental GMT Report 1, the GAP recommends the following:

Option 1: Move the shoreward boundary of the Non-Trawl RCA between 37° 07' N. lat. and 36° N. lat. to 50 fm, which was the shoreward boundary prior to January 1, 2024. Revert modified trip limits for the below species and complexes back to what they were prior to the September and November 2023 inseason actions (with potential exceptions for vermilion rockfish and minor shallow/deeper nearshore rockfish). The revised trip limits for the limited entry fixed gear and the OA sectors would be supported by the GAP as well.

PFMC
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